

Where We Stand

by Walt W. Rostow

Counselor of the Department and Chairman of the Policy Planning Council¹

It is now 16 months to the day since I arrived at the White House through the snow to be sworn in as an official of this administration. I thought it might be helpful to use the occasion of our meeting this morning to take stock of where we now stand in dealing with the foreign policy problems which became our responsibility at that time.

In his inaugural address² the President expressed his understanding that he took office at a time of grave difficulty on the world scene: and he committed himself to "struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself."

His vision of the task was not a matter of rhetoric. It translated itself quickly into hard, concrete, and challenging day-to-day tasks.

We faced two kinds of problems: first, a series of urgent and dangerous crises; second, a series of slower moving but equally dangerous situations which, if constructive action were not taken, might slide against us and the free world as a whole.

I should like to describe briefly what each of these sets of problems were like, what we have done about them, and then to try to assess roughly where we now appear to stand.

Five Areas of Crisis

In Southeast Asia we found that the agreements made at Geneva in 1954 with respect to both Laos and Viet-Nam were in disarray. The United

States is not a party to those agreements, but we did agree not to upset them, if they were honored by the Communists. In January 1961 they were not being honored.

In Laos there was a civil war in which Communist Pathet Lao, backed by the North Vietnamese, were seeking to take over the country. In South Viet-Nam there has been built up since 1958—as a result of decisions taken in Hanoi—a most dangerous guerrilla war based on infiltration, supply, and tutelage by Communists in the north.

In the Congo there existed all the potentialities for a civil war which might result in the creation of a Communist base in central Africa. It might then have been used to spread subversion throughout the area.

In Cuba a Communist government existed already committed to spreading the methods of subversion and guerrilla warfare, which Castro had used to gain power in Cuba, to the mainland of Latin America.

Thus, when we read Mr. Khrushchev's speech of January 6, 1961, and the blessing he gave to the methods of subversion and guerrilla warfare, we took this matter very seriously indeed. We regarded the challenge not merely as a series of regional crises but part of a general Communist offensive designed to corrode the free world without confronting either our nuclear or our conventional military strength. All the potentialities existed in January 1961 for the spread of Communist power by these methods into Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

In addition, we faced the crisis in Berlin. In 1953 Mr. Khrushchev had stated his demand that the Western Powers be withdrawn from Berlin

¹ Address made before the 1962 Democratic Women's Conference at Washington, D.C., on May 21 (press release 25 dated May 19).

² For text, see BULLETIN of Feb. 6, 1961, p. 175.

and the status of that city be so changed as to make access to it a matter over which the East German Communists could exercise a decisive control. By this route they aimed to destroy the basis for a free West Berlin.

Moves To Counter Communist Expansion

These five crises are still with us; but, on each of them, we have moved to protect the vital interests of the United States and the free world and to seal off the danger of an extension of Communist power.

In Laos we have set out to create a neutral and independent state which would permit the people of this small country to work out their destiny in their own way. This formula is in the spirit of the Geneva Accords, but it has been endangered by the recent Communist attack on Nam Tha and we have moved forces into Southeast Asia² to protect the region against the possible breakdown of our understanding with the Soviet Union that this is a common policy. The achievement of this objective will be difficult, and it may require a prolonged effort. But we are sure our objective is the best among difficult alternatives: namely, to get the foreign forces out of Laos and to create a situation where the existence of a neutral, independent state could avoid a direct confrontation in that unstable area between Communist and free-world military power.

In Viet-Nam we are working with the South Vietnamese to help them defeat the guerrilla war which has been imposed by the north: and to get the North Vietnamese elements back where they belong—north of the 17th parallel. Here we have made progress. A situation of the greatest and most immediate danger has been converted into one which is much more hopeful than it was even 6 months ago, but the road ahead may be long and hard.

In the Congo we have backed the effort of the U.N. to help the Congolese create a unified, independent, and viable country. There still is no final agreement. We are not yet out of the woods, but we have come a long way. Despite many difficulties the U.N. has played an important role in helping the Congolese toward the creation of a truly independent African state. In so doing, it helped frustrate the evident ambition of Moscow to create a Communist base in Africa.

² *Ibid.*, June 4, 1962, p. 904.

In Cuba, after the failure last April of the gallant band of men who aimed to restore freedom to their country, we have worked with our friends in Latin America to isolate the Communist government in Cuba and to insure that the techniques of indirect aggression which the Cuban Communists would like to apply to Latin America will be frustrated. The danger of Cuban intervention in Latin America has been diminished by our own actions and the actions we have taken through the Organization of American States at the Punta del Este conference last January.⁴ The hemisphere is now alert to the danger of subversion and guerrilla warfare, and it is in a position to move together if the threat should become real.

Aside from our efforts to seal off and deal with these four crises, the whole Government, under the personal leadership of the President, has turned with extraordinary vigor to the problem of learning how to prevent or to deal with the techniques of subversion and guerrilla warfare on which the international Communist movement places such high hopes for the 1960's. This problem—long given relatively low priority—is now being attacked by the best military and civilian minds in the Government.

With respect to Berlin, we formulated our position and held to it. Every government in the world knows that we are prepared to back our play. We intend that the people of Berlin maintain their freedom, their unencumbered access to the West, and the protection which the presence in Berlin of Western military forces alone can afford. Moreover, we intend to work with our friends in Berlin to maintain that city as a viable, constructive, and important part of the free-world community.

U.S. Aid Programs

In addition to these five crises we found, as I said earlier, that slow but dangerous erosion was taking place elsewhere. We lacked, for example, a policy which would align the United States actively with the great forces in Latin America which seek economic development and greater social justice. To this our response was the Alliance for Progress.

We found that we lacked a foreign aid program capable of aligning the United States with the similar forces at work in Asia, the Middle East, and

⁴ For background, see *ibid.*, Feb. 19, 1962, pp. 267-284.

Africa. In those vast regions peoples and governments are determined to develop their status as independent nations and to provide for themselves and their children an environment of economic growth and progress. Our response was a foreign aid program designed to help those nations which showed a capacity to mobilize their own energies and resources for the development of their societies. Our aid program is rooted in the sound principle of self-help. Legislation passed by the Congress in 1961 has made it possible for us to make reliable long-term commitments to nations which have created national development programs. By this means we hope gradually to build a stable partnership with the new and aspiring nations as each of them goes forward to the stage where it can qualify for this type of assistance.

Both the Alliance for Progress and our foreign aid programs in general are in the midst of a complicated turnaround. National development programs cannot be developed overnight, if they are truly serious. Moreover, within the administration we have had to reorganize the policies and men to do the new job. The President has described our effort in terms of a "decade of development," and we are still in its first year.

Nevertheless we are confident that we are on the right track. A number of development programs have already come forward which meet the new standards; not only the United States but the richer nations of Western Europe and Japan are joining in efforts to back these programs. This is a tougher and longer job than the Marshall plan, but we deeply believe it must and can be done.

Other Areas of U.S. Activity

With respect to Western Europe we found that our own policies and those of the Western European nations had not yet come to grips with two massive facts: first, that Western Europe in the 1950's underwent an extraordinary surge of growth and development and that it was ready to accept a new degree of responsibility on the world scene; second, the movement toward European unity—which we had helped to foster immediately after the war—had gained real momentum. A united Europe had become a real possibility, but its shape and our policy toward its evolution were not yet determined.

Our response to these facts has been to encour-

age the movement toward European unity while proposing to the Europeans a new transatlantic partnership. We are in the process of working out the terms of that partnership in military matters, in trade, in problems of currency and reserves, in aiding the underdeveloped areas, and in many other areas. The development of these new relationships will take time. We are dealing now not with weak, impoverished nations, as was the case after the war. We are dealing with proud and strong nations seeking to find new relations to one another and to the United States, seeking to define also their role on the world scene for the 1960's and beyond. This exciting process, which, if successful, will add vast strength and stability to the free world, will certainly confront difficulties. But we are confident that our policy is pointed in the right direction and the outcome will, in the end, fulfill our hopes.

With respect to Japan, we have moved in many ways to come closer to that nation and its people, whose remarkable recovery has placed it in a position to play a constructive role on a worldwide basis.

Finally, the President committed himself to work to reduce or eliminate the danger of nuclear war. Our first effort was to formulate a proposal for a test ban treaty⁵ which, if accepted, would have been both a limited contribution of substance and a precedent for wider disarmament efforts. As the President has said, the rejection by the Soviet Union of that proposal was the greatest disappointment of his first year in office. Nevertheless, the stakes for the United States and for all humanity are too high to permit this disappointment to deflect us from the task.

The new Arms Control and Disarmament Agency is now on its feet and working hard on the difficult technical problems which are involved. Arms control will not be achieved by wishing it, or by merely talking about its desirability. It will be achieved when we have devised hardheaded, concrete proposals that offer more security for all—and when the Soviet Government is prepared to accept effective international inspection. We have laid before the Geneva disarmament conference serious proposals⁶ which, if accepted, would protect our vital security interests while diminish-

⁵ For text, see *ibid.*, June 5, 1961, p. 870.

⁶ For text of an outline of a treaty on general and complete disarmament, see *ibid.*, May 7, 1962, p. 747.

ing radically the dangers of war. And we shall stay with it, for surely, as time goes on, men will come to understand, on the other side of the Iron Curtain as on this, that modern technology makes it mandatory for all to accept international inspection as the price for living in tolerable security on this small planet.

Where then do we stand? None of the crises we inherited are yet finally solved: all are still dangerous. We live close to the edge of war in an atomic age, and we must learn to live there with poise. But we have made real progress in reducing the dangers these crises represented, and we have formulated policies with respect to each, which we are prepared to back with all the great strength at our command.

The general Communist offensive which these crises represented has not been definitely brought to an end, but the line has been held and its momentum has been halted.

In the longer run, creative tasks we have undertaken with respect to Latin America and other underdeveloped areas, Europe, Japan, and disarmament, we know where we want to go and we are moving. But we are also aware that it will take many years of hard, persistent, and purposeful effort to achieve the objectives we have set.

I can report, then, that we are well launched along the paths the President laid out in his inaugural address. We have met squarely the crises we confronted. But we have not let them deflect us from the larger task of not merely defending the free world but moving it toward the goal of a free community of nations—embracing in partnership both the more developed and less developed nations. Our Defense Establishment has never been in better shape, and we intend to keep it that way. But we are ready to move in practical ways toward peace—if the Soviet Union is prepared to accept effective inspection.

We are in good heart; we have a long way to go; but we intend to get there.

Letters of Credence

Kuwait

The newly appointed Ambassador of Kuwait, Abdul Rahman Salim al-Atiqi, presented his credentials to President Kennedy on June 1. For texts of the Ambassador's remarks and the President's reply, see Department of State press release 520 dated June 1.

Secretary Rusk's News Conference of May 31

Press release 517 dated June 1

Secretary Rusk: Apparently we were out-ranked by an international meeting going on in our other room. I hope you won't find this too uncomfortable.

I do not have a formal statement to make today, but I would like, before taking your questions, to make a brief comment on the subject of disarmament.

Disarmament

Today the Geneva conference is filing its report to the United Nations [U.N. doc. DC/258] on the progress of the conference thus far. That was an interim report due by June 1. I understand that the report is some 100,000 words in length and consists primarily of a factual account of the proceedings at the Geneva conference.

We regret that this report does not represent more substantial progress in this field. There has been an agreement on a preamble, but we have been disappointed at the negative reaction of the Soviet Union on a number of other substantial points—for example, on nuclear testing, and on the proposals that we have made for Stage I of a disarmament treaty,¹ on the war propaganda point on which they reversed their position this past week, and on the indications that they are going to be unwilling to accept a United Nations force to assist in maintaining peace as we move into a disarmament period.

Now, we are concerned about the possibilities of progress in this field, because we believe seriously and deeply that the security of all of us, the Soviet Union as well as ourselves, does not lie in an unlimited permanent arms race of increasing cost and increasing instability but in arrangements which would bring this race to a halt and, if possible, turn it downward.

We have felt that the contribution which had been asked of the Soviet Union on a nuclear test ban was the minimum contribution that could reasonably be expected to bring tests to an end on a permanent basis.

We should like to see some actual physical steps

¹ For text of a U.S. outline of a treaty on general and complete disarmament, see BULLETIN of May 7, 1962, p. 747.